

The Life and Travels of John Bartram (1699-1777), „His Majesty’s Botanist for North America“, and his Sons Isaac, Moses and William

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John Bartram, a Quaker, came from Derbyshire, England and settled 1681 in America. He had established himself as one of the leaders of the new community of Darby Creek near Philadelphia. He had five children among them William who was the father of the future botanist John.

John Bartram

John received the average education in a Quaker school. By the time he reached twelve years, his interest developed to ‚Physick‘ and surgery and later to ‚Botanicks‘.

In 1709 his father William moved to Carolina. There was a lot of trouble between the indians and the white settlers, some of their land had been purchased, but much had simply been taken.

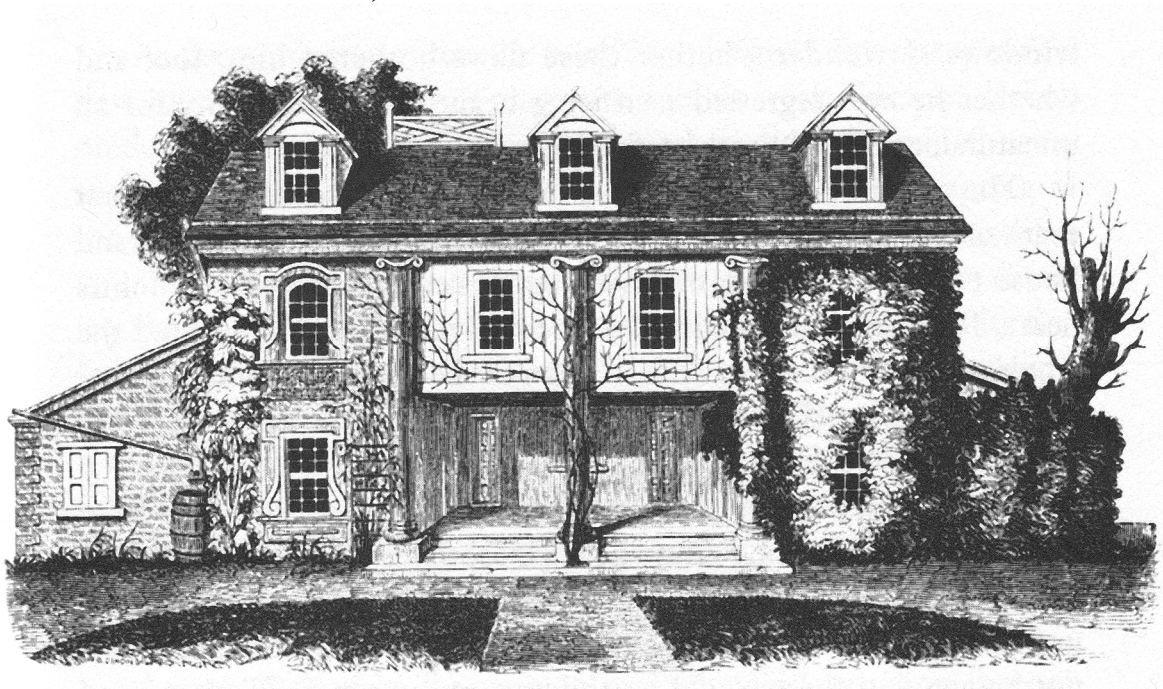
22.9.1711: Indians attacked the area and William was killed. His second wife and the children were taken prisoners for half a year.

John Bartram and Mary Maris were married 1722. Their son Isaac was born in 1724. She died five years later in 1727.

1728 John Bartram purchased land at Kingsessing near Philadelphia.

One year later John Bartram and his second wife Ann Mendenhall were married.

Residence of John Bartram, built in 1730





John built a house on his farm which is still standing today. The farm behind the house was accompanied by a large garden and one of the first botanical gardens in America. He bought a lot of land round the farm and in Philadelphia where he built houses.

Children:

1730 James

1732 Moses

1734 Elizabeth I

1736 Mary

1739 Elizabeth II and William, who were twins

1741 Ann

1743 John

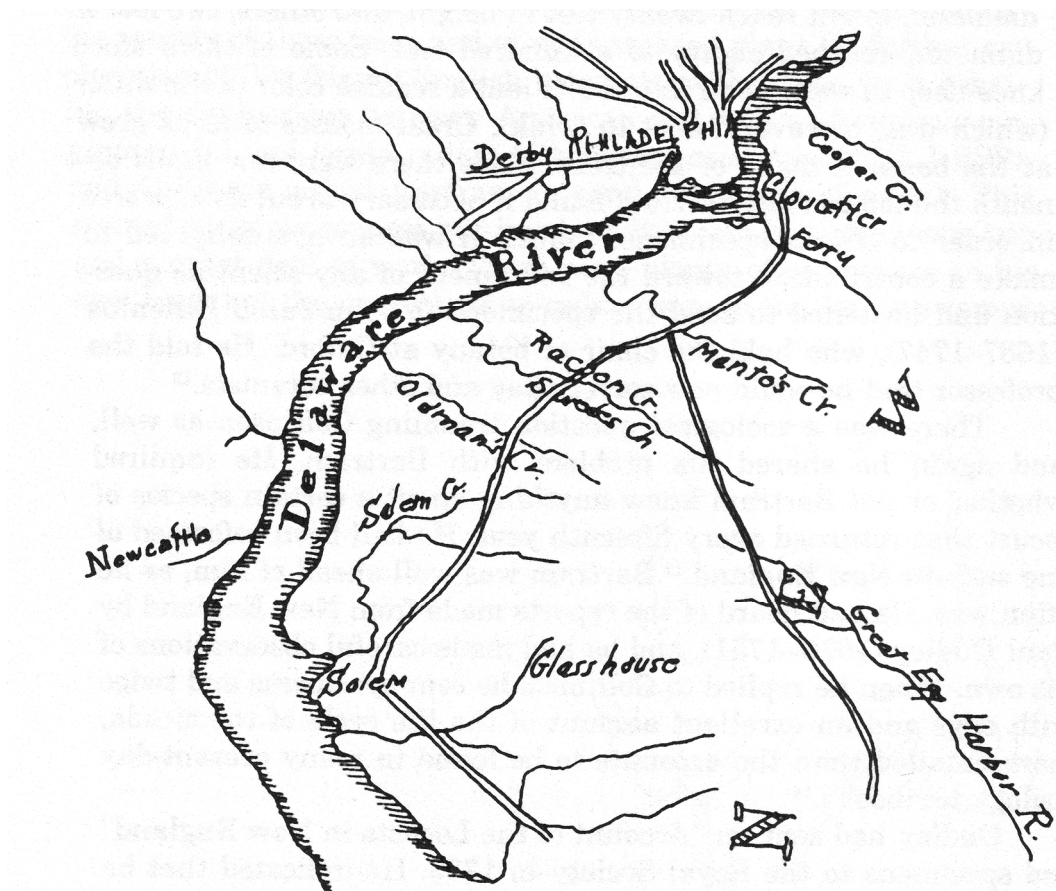
1748 Benjamin

About 1733 a friend of Bartram sent some plants to Peter Collinson (1694–1768), London. He was a Quaker also and engaged in commerce with the colonies and had a passion for collecting plants.

The correspondence and friendship between them began 1733, a lifelong relationship about thirty five years.

There was an exchange between John and Peter, who sent a lot of plants and seeds to John. Since 1735 Bartram sent with the seeds always herbarium specimens which were identified by the most knowing botanists in England.

Map, trip to Great Cedar Swamp 1736



In 1735 John started his botanical traveling. He found a great variety of plants and sent these specimens often to Collinson and other persons interested in horticulture.

Customers of Bartram I and II

Nursery Gardeners

First year in which Bartram filled their orders

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. Balk, who sent seeds and plants to Germany | 1760 |
| *2. Bert, who also sent nursery stock to Germany | 1755 |
| 3. William Borthwick, merchant and seedsman, Edinburgh | 1763 |
| 4. Bouchard, Paris | 1755 |
| + 5. John Bush (Busch), Hackney, Middlesex, nurseryman, with German customers. Seldom did Bush order fewer than two boxes and often he ordered three. In 1764 he complained that the boxes were not up to par and his German clients were unwilling to pay the full price. | 1760 |
| 6. Cross, "Seedsman." | 1760 |
| 7. Fern | 1760 |
| 8. Robert Frazier, "Gardener." | 1751 |
| + 9. James Gordon, <i>The Thistle & Crown</i> , 25 Fen- | 1746 |

*35. Sir Harry Englefield.	1756
*36. Earl of Essex.	1756
37. Lord Farnham	1759
*38. Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh.	1762
+ 39. Robert Fenwick, Liverpool. Bartram wrote to Collinson, "I am not surprised at fenwick's knaving being [thee] tells me he is a lawyer" (10 December 1745, BP 1:31).	1744
40. George Fernat.	1758
41. Lord Fitzmaurice.	1753
*42. Thomas Fitzsimmons, Esq.	n.d.
43. Andrew Fletcher, Esq., Mitchell's friend, Member of Parliament and secretary to the Duke of Argyll.	1767
+ 44. Benjamin Franklin. He ordered a box for a friend while in England and a box sent to Paris in 1777 (MJB, p. 406).	1757
*45. Fraser, Esq.	1752
46. Frederick, King of Prussia, who ordered a guinea's worth of white mulberry seed to grow feed for his silkworms (PC to JB, 24 April 1751, BP 2:86).	1751
+ 47. Frederick, Prince of Wales. Dr. Mitchell was instrumental in the ordering of the first box, as his friend, Lord Bute, gave the order. Four boxes were ordered in 1752.	1750
48. William Gallagher.	1760
49. Alexander Stuart, Earl of Galloway, through Mitchell.	1750
50. Colonel Ganzel.	1767
51. King George III. Bartram sent him a box of specimens in 1764 and, as King's Botanist from 1765, he sent him specimens yearly.	1764
*52. Sir Archibald Grant.	1759
53. Mr. Gynonder.	1749
54. Richard Hall, Esquire. Over a period of ten years ordered several boxes.	1747
+ 55. Charles Hamilton, Esq., Dublin.	1747
56. B. Hammet, London, through Thomas Ord (Ord to JB, 10 October, BP 4:93).	1763
*57. Capel Hanbury of Mark Lane.	1751

Collinson was excited by the reports of trips and gave advices for further travels. „Bartram was amused by Collinson's idea of a well-equipped expedition. He was delighted to go, but one good horse for himself was all the he required..."

Bartram's most exciting discovery in 1737/38 was the American species of Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolium* L.). Benjamin Franklin announced it in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Frederick Gronovius (1690–1760), botanist of Leiden, wrote to his friend Carolus Linnaeus (1707–1778) in Sweden and Collinson informed the Royal Society.

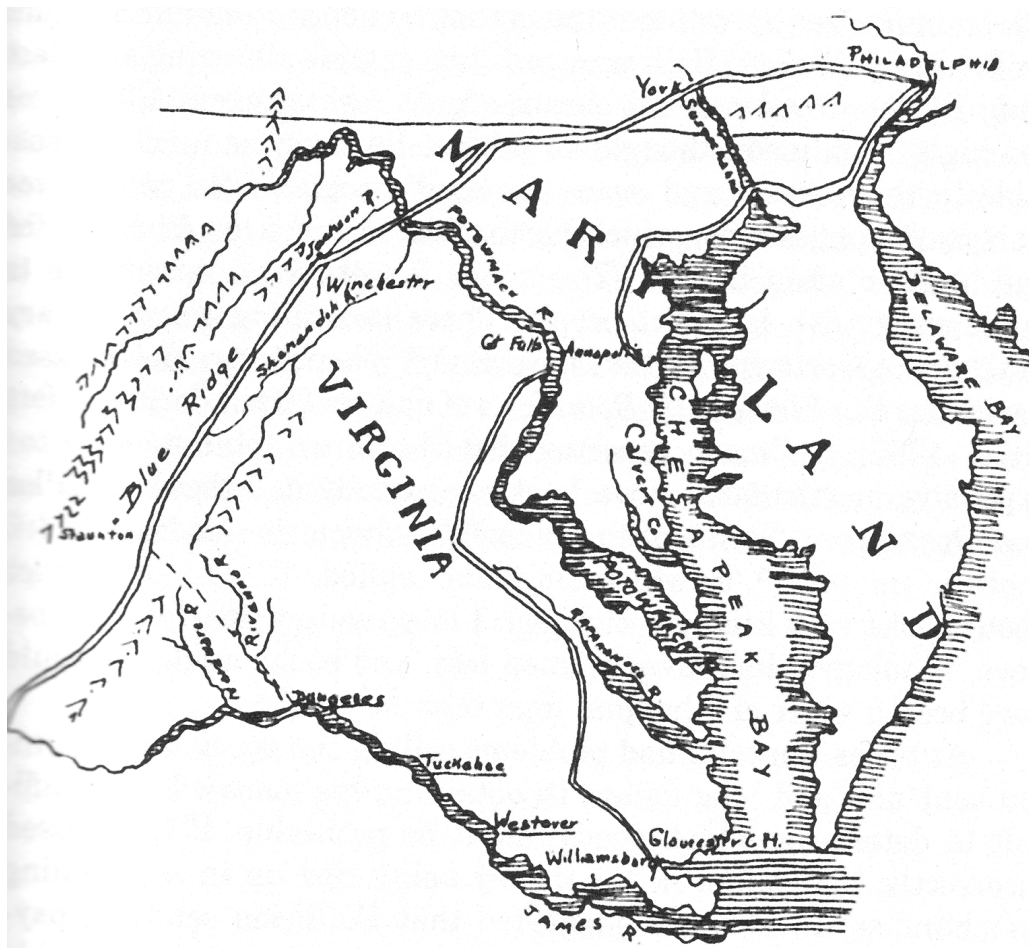
Bartram sent so called „five-guinea boxes“ with seeds to England with often more than 100 different species of trees and shrubs included.

Geological specimens

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Piece of Carolina quartz | 28 seems to be petrified chip |
| 2 Carolina petrified pine with its bark | 29 glittering geode from Jersey |
| 3 Sea limestone Antigo | 30 iron oar from Carolina |
| 4 Black slatish stone from Carolina | 31 earth from pequea lead |
| 5 iron oar from Carolina | 32 petrified impressions from ye Ohio |
| 6 petrifications from our back mountains | 33 from a cole mine at ye Ohio |
| 7 common Cotton stone | 34 pet wood from spar at ye End of Carolina |
| 8 Marchasite from Carolina | 35 red clay from my Sand pit |
| 9 Alum native & its oar | 36 striped stone from Crum Creek |
| 10 black spotted stone from Jamaica | 37 ground muscle |
| 11 fine bole from lead mine in New run | 38 crystal from skulkill gulph |
| 12 petrified snail from Cresops hall | 39 choice plated iron oar from Jersey |
| 13 flint from Virginia | 40 petrified wood hicory from Carolina |
| 14 great shells petrified from no river | 41 coper oar from Jersey |
| 15 thin plate limestone fort cumberland | 42 star stone from under ground Carolina |
| 16 cubical Marchasites | 43 coper color scaly earth ye back countrey |
| 17 petrified impressions in Sandstone | 44 coal from pitsburgh |
| 18 petrifications | 45 from ye Gret Valey in search of copper |
| 19 petrified Cockel shells from Jersey | 46 asbestos I dug out of a lodestone quarry |
| 20 good touch stone Jamaica | 47 lead oar containing silver |
| 21 smooth white Compo stone Jamaica | 48 susquehana |
| 22 thin plate of Spar in bed of gravel | 49 from ye same mine |
| 23 parts of Indian pots | 49 white earth detached masses in gravel |
| 24 cours ruby from banks of Delaware | 50 clay stone from Stanton |
| 25 from our sea coast | 51 my son split it out of a rock |
| 26 Curious kind of flint field | 52 a belemnite |
| 27 gray sandstone Conestoga | 53 Iron sand from new england |

1754 Bartram planned another trip to Virginia and Carolina but the English and French war made it impossible. He decided to visit the eastern coast instead. Again he was accompanied by Billy (that was William), his son, the 'little botanist'. Billy was fifteen years old and had already made short trips with his father.

Map, trip to Virginia 1737



Bartram sought Collinson's advice:

„I want to put him to some business by which he may, with care and industry, get a temperate, reasonable living. I am afraid that botany and drawing will not afford him one, and hard labour don't agree with him...”

In the meantime he set his son to drawing turtles. Collinson who got some drawings enthusiastically said: „England's most renowned botanical illustrators could not do much better.”

But Bartram continued to find a mercantile job for Billy. He apprenticed Billy to Captain James Child who had a big store. There he sold dry goods, pewter, snuff, window glass and other items.

Moses

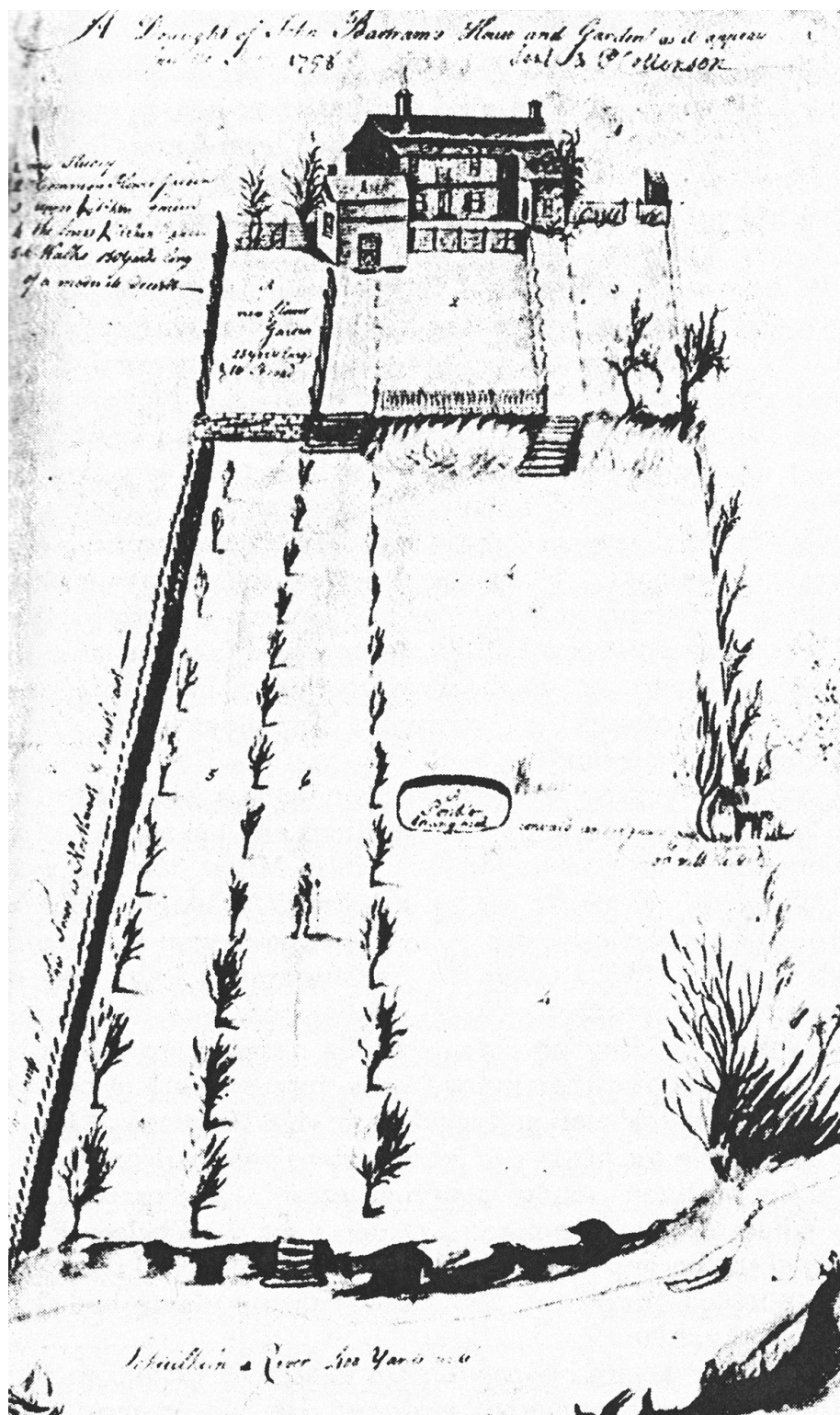


Billy's older brother Moses had gone to sea. In London the nineteen-year-old boy met Collinson who invited him to visit his garden, which Moses later described to his father. In 1756 Moses was master of the ship Corsley, belonging to Captain Child.

William

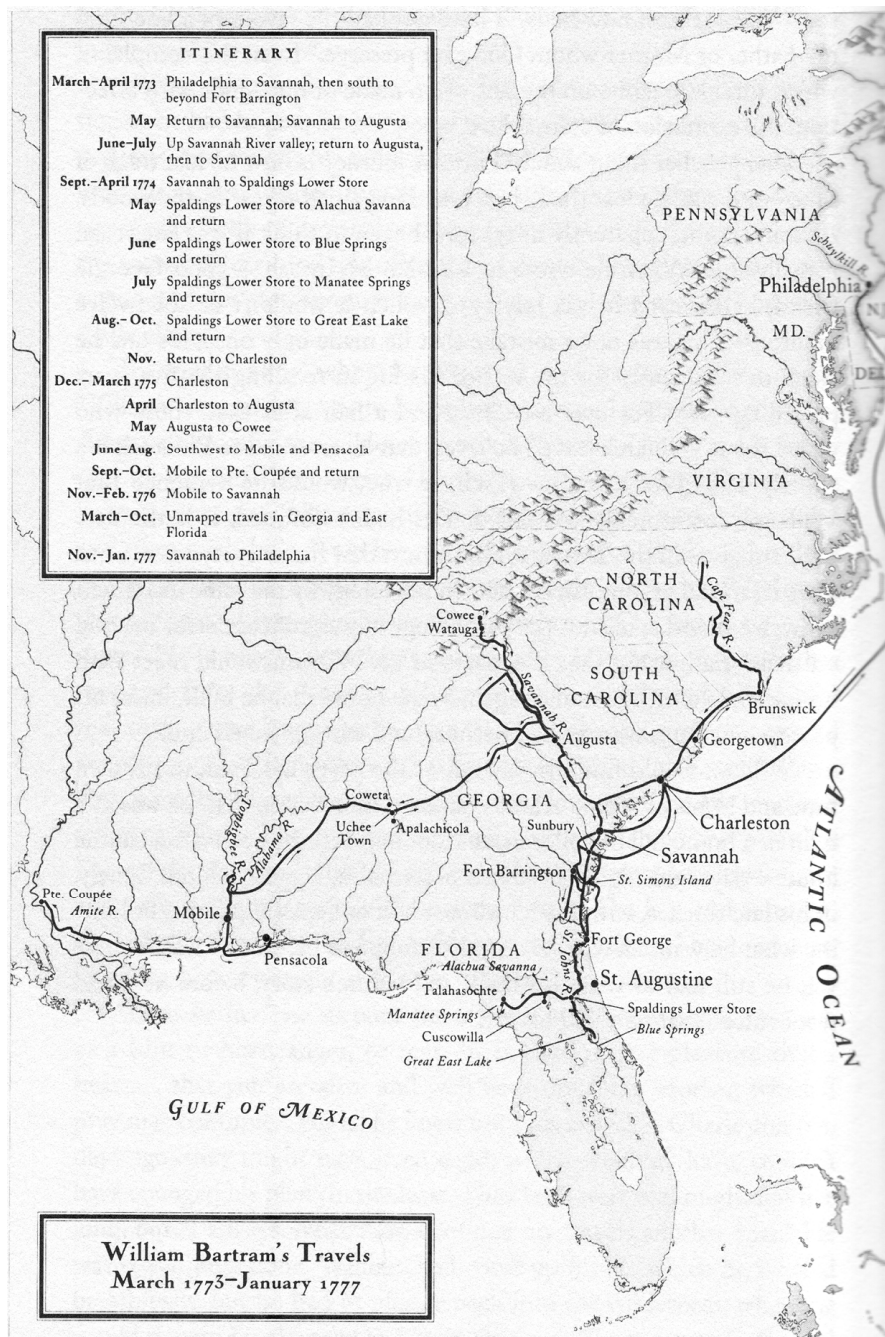
In 1758 William Bartram decided to make a rough plan of his father's house and garden after he had heard so much about Collinson's garden from his brother Moses.

House and garden of the Bartram's in Kingsessing 1758



A new flower garden, the old flower garden, a kitchen garden, a vegetable garden, a seed house, three long avenues of trees, the Schuylkill-river and on top the two story house. Collinson wrote: „We are all much Entertained with thy Draught of thy House & Garden, the situation is delightful.“

Map, William Bartram's Travels 1773-1777



„Travels“ of William Bartram

*Travels Through North & South Carolina,
Georgia, East & West Florida, the
Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories
of the Muscogulges, or Creek Confederacy,
and the Country of the Chactaws;
Containing an Account of the Soil and
Natural Productions of Those Regions,
Together with Observations on the
Manners of the Indians*

John Fothergill

In the same way as did his father with Collinson, William had a most important connection to John Fothergill, a prominent London physician and horticulturalist who had the largest botanical garden in England.

Franklinia alatamaha



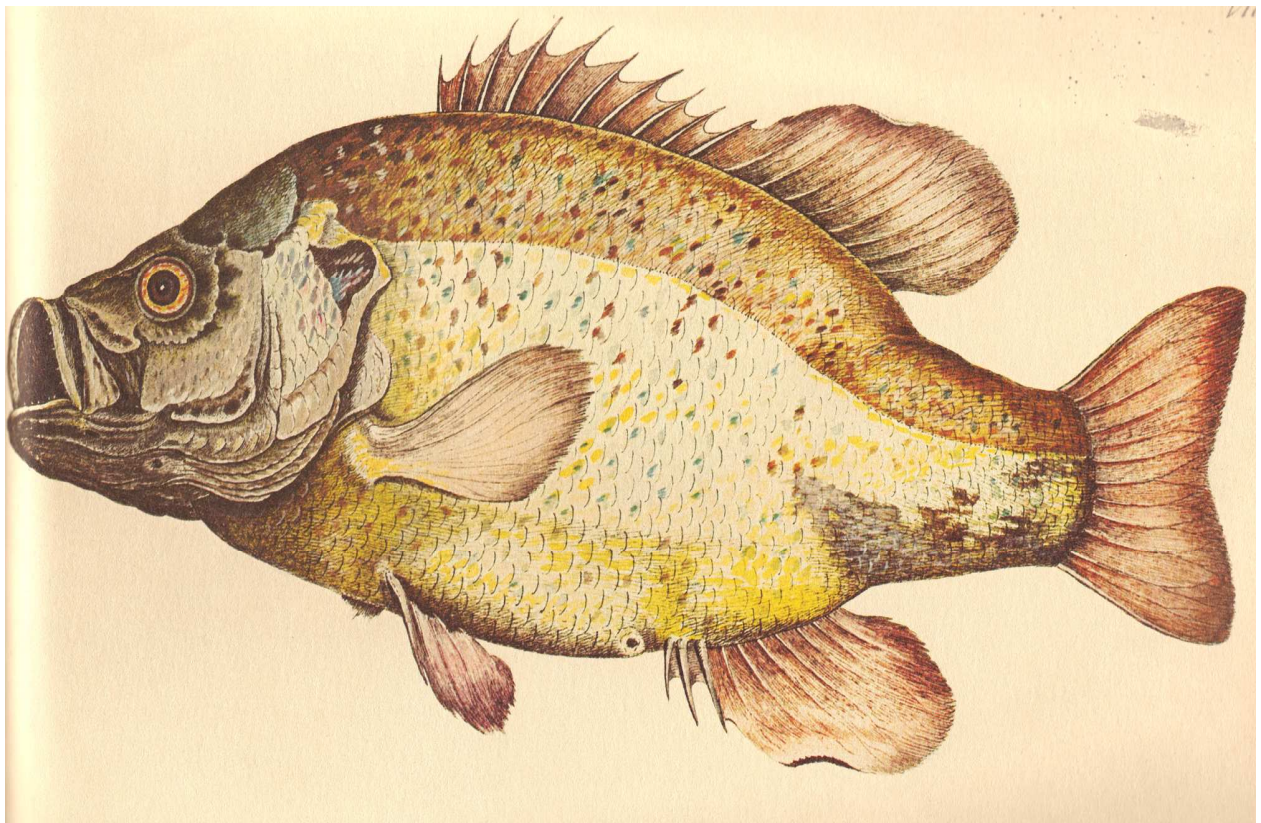
Fothergill had offered support for expeditions to study the flora and fauna of the colonies. Also he had spent money for drawing and specimens of plants and seeds.

Magnolia Warbler



(See introduction of „Travels“ by William Bartram „At the request of Dr. Fothergill, of London, to Search the Floridas, and the western parts of Carolina and Georgia, for the discovery of rare and useful productions of nature, chiefly in the vegetable kingdom“...)

Great Yellow Bream or Warmouth



When Fothergill died in 1780 this work were unappreciated by the heirs and brought William neither fame nor fortune.
Bartram's drawings of plants and animals for Dr. Fothergill were not published in his lifetime.
The first publication of the so called Fothergill Album was edited by Joseph Ewan 1968.

Alegator of St. Johns



After his „Travels“ 1773–1777 William with no source of income spent the years following his father’s death 1777 helping his brother John to manage the farm.

Mico-chluccho, Long Warrior or King of the Semioles



Later after little correction the frontispiece of „Travels“ 1791.

Isaac



About Isaac's education and training was only little known. Isaac was a child of Bartram and his first wife Mary. He was interested like his father in medicinal plants and other aspects of natural history.

He had been apprenticed to an apothecary, possibly Thomas Say. Isaac spent approximately five years mixing medicines, studying anatomy and learning to pull teeth.

The apothecary of this time was comparable to today's general practitioner. In the shop were mixed „all sorts of chemical preparations and herb prescriptions.“

In 1756 he went into partnership with Say. The shop was signed with a bottle and three bolt heads. 1760 Isaac and Moses formed a partnership in the drug business with an apothecary shop which they had taken over from Thomas Say.

John Bartram used his London credit to facilitate purchase of medicines for his sons.

1767 Moses and Isaac had purchased land together, possibly for the raising of medicinal plants.

Thomas Say

The ancestors of Say, also Quakers, came from Bristol. The elder Thomas Say (1709–1796) started his professional life as a saddle maker's apprentice. Later he sold his saddlery and opened an apothecary shop. – In 1756 Isaac Bartram joined him as partner.

His son Benjamin (1755–1813) father of the naturalist (Thomas Say) was a trained medical doctor.

Dr. Benjamin Say's wife Ann Bonsall was the granddaughter of botanist John Bartram (1699–1777).

Thomas Say 1787-1834



Thomas' venture as an apothecary failed several years after it began. He became later a most famous entomologist and conchologist. He wrote the first book published in America on insects: *American Entomology* (1824–1828)

Account book of Isaac Bartram 1797

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Philadelphia Nov: 7th 1797

Isaac Bartram Senr Dr to Cash	8.9
Thomas Phips Dr to 100 White Lead	4.15
Thomas Mathias Dr to Sundries as per Bill	5.1.11
Isaac Bartram Senr Dr to Cash	10.24
Isaac Bartram Senr Dr to Cash	1.10.9
Isaac Bartram Senr Dr to Cash \$5.98	
John Bartram Senr Dr to Cash	11.1.3
John Lyle Dr to Upstated Pills had at Sunday Times of	1.6
Cash Dr to Doct Dr to Turnstock	
Received in full	22.11.3
Do Ar. Dietrick Turnstock Dr to	
Sundries as per Bill Belvoir do	20.3.11
John Bartram Dr to Cash - 18.54	6.15
Isaac Bartram Senr Dr to Cash	
Paid Worrel's Bills	1.13.9
Isaac Bartram Senr Dr to Cash	11.3
Isaac Bartram Senr Dr to Cash	

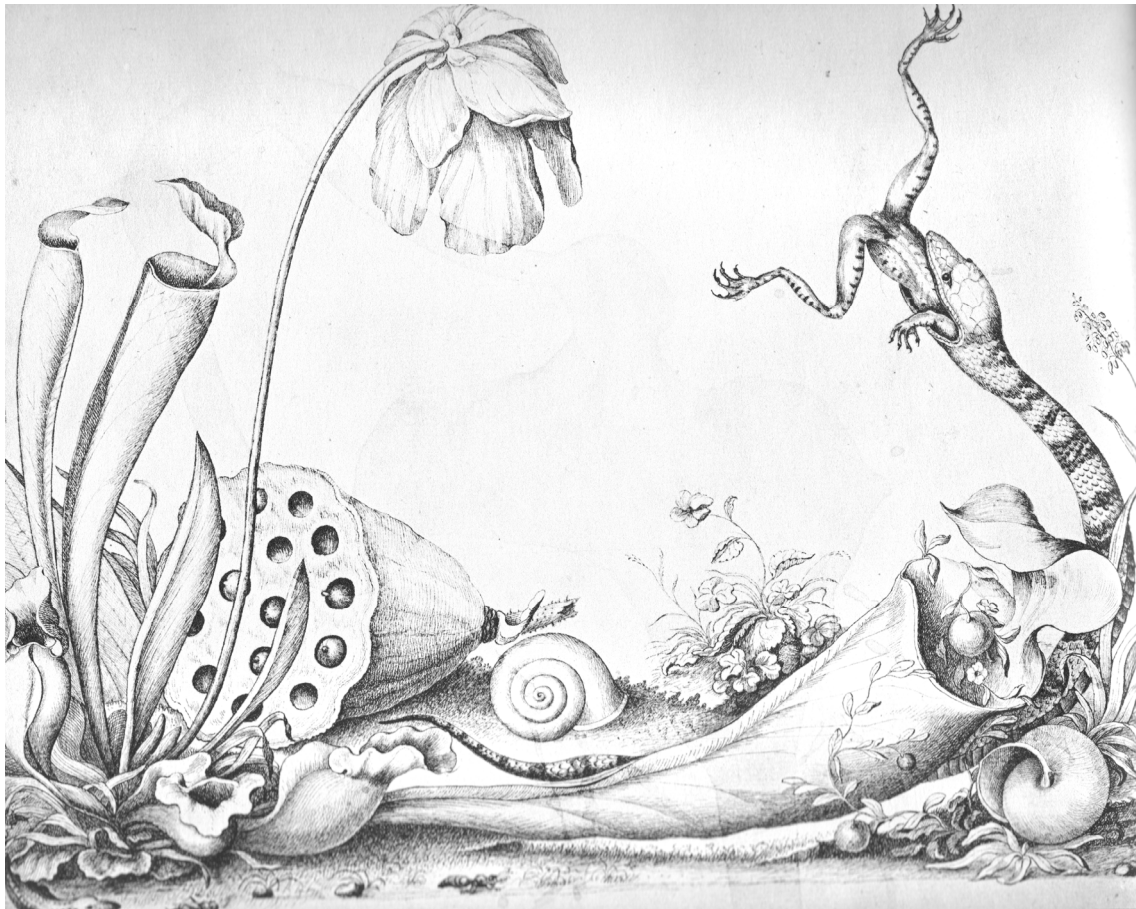
The account book of Isaac's apothecary shop was purchased by the William L. Clements Library Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1997.

„The Isaac Bartram Account book contains almost 250 pages of detailed accounts of transactions for pharmaceutical materials, many of which appear to have been the natural products of Bartram Gardens in Philadelphia. Many of the accounts are directed to his relatives, including John Bartram, who is listed for dispersals of cash and for advancing cash to his son James to use for laundry and for his studies under Benjamin Rush. Other family members mentioned are Moses, nephew James Bartram, and niece Ann Bartram.

Isaac Bartram maintained accounts with a large number of customers over the years covered in this volume, including 22 women and many local physicians. Some of the physicians from southeastern Pennsylvania who were mentioned in the account book were Jacob Baker, Samuel Fahnstock, and Jonathan Kearsley.

In addition to plants and plant products, Bartram dealt in glass, salt petre, bottles, pill boxes, knives, ochre and other pigments, and other goods used in the pharmaceutical trade. Four pages at the end of the volume list purchasers of rosewater, most of whom were women.“

„Sarasena“ or the Trumpet Leaf and Pitcher Plant, American Lotus, land snail and snake



Thomas P. Slaughter in his book „The Natures of John and William Bartram“ had given an explanation to „The Sarasena“ drawing of William:

„This is Williams’s most striking image of all nature as somebody’s meal. The picture is most effective if you start by looking at the lower left-hand corner and then scan it counterclockwise. He need not put us in the scene to make our place clear.

Mankind, the great hunter of all, becomes in our turn the prey of insects and worms. The circle is full.

P.S.

Most of the showed pictures were taken from published books and I have no rights on them.